

## *Substance Abuse*

### *Enabling Behaviors and Bottom Lines*

#### **Enabling Behaviors**

Out of love, fear, we do all sorts of things to protect our alcoholics. Most of the things we do, however, actually help the addiction instead. As a result, the addiction flourishes, and our loved ones get sicker. This is called enabling. Discover ways you've enabled the addiction and check all the behaviors you can recognize in yourself:

- ☐ Give or lend money
- ☐ Provide a place to live
- ☐ Clean up after messes
- ☐ Supply a car
- ☐ Bail out of jail
- ☐ Lie to cover up problems
- ☐ Deny the addiction to others
- ☐ Ignore or laugh at the problem
- ☐ Argue, plead, beg, threaten, placate, or bargain
- ☐ Put yourself in jeopardy
- ☐ Leave minor children alone with the alcoholic
- ☐ Take over responsibilities
- ☐ Protect from negative consequences
- ☐ Avoid social functions
- ☐ Offer a job
- ☐ Pay for school
- ☐ Pay for alcohol or other drug use
- ☐ Others

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#### **Bottom Lines**

If you think you don't have a bottom line, go back and review ways you've enabled the addiction. Each of our enabling behaviors can be turned into a bottom line. The following will help you brainstorm.

"I will no longer give you money"

"I will not pay your mortgage from now on."

"If you do not accept help for your drug problem, you can no longer live in my home."

"I'm taking the car keys away until you get help for your alcohol problem."

"I'm not a liar, so I will no longer lie to people about your addiction problem."

"I've pretended not to notice your problem in the past. From now on, if you come over when you are high, I'm not going to let you in the house."

"The next time I see you get in a car to drive intoxicated, I will call the police."

"I won't listen to your problems until you get help for your number-one problem – alcohol and other drugs."

I will no longer ride with you or socialize with you when you are drunk."

"I will no longer pick up your slack at work. When you don't get your work done, you'll have to explain to the boss."

I'm not going to tell your boss you have the flu when you have a hangover."

"I will not invite you to family get-togethers until you get help for your drug problem."

"You can no longer work for me unless you complete treatment and stay sober."

Your mom and I will quit paying your school expenses until you get help."

"If you don't get help on your own, we will have you court-ordered into treatment."

The bottom line is not a punishment. It's a decision we make *not* to support the addiction and to take care of ourselves. For the alcoholic, the bottom line is a natural consequence of deciding to stay in the disease of addiction. Below, write three of your bottom lines:

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